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EVALUATION

Report of the Administrator

I. PURPOSE

1. The present report contains a summary of the evaluation work accomplished in 1993, including major evaluations carried out, methodological work in the context of emerging programme trends, thrusts and approaches; the work plan for the biennium 1994-1995 is contained in the annex.

II. MAJOR EVALUATIONS UNDERTAKEN IN 1993

2. Integration of evaluation results: feedback. In pursuance of Governing Council decision 92/24 of May 1992, the Central Evaluation Office (CEO) initiated an extensive in-depth analysis of the current status of feedback from evaluation findings in UNDP. The exercise consisted of a study by external consultants, a questionnaire administered to UNDP field offices and a statistical analysis of evaluation reports available in the CEO database. The generic issues emanating from these documents have been synthesized by CEO and are contained in annex II to the present report. The major recommendations are as follows: (a) UNDP should establish a systematic feedback strategy or a strong feedback culture. Feedback and lessons learned should be consistently integrated as part of UNDP programme functions; (b) organizational practice or systems currently in place should stress the use of evaluation as a vital resource for decision-making. The absence of any systematic plan for evaluation generated by senior management hinders the efficient use of evaluation. Evaluation at strategy and policy levels are requested on an ad hoc basis. The results of field level evaluation are rarely given broader consideration in the Organization; (c) UNDP internal communication and information strategies and policies require substantial strengthening to support a strategic feedback policy. Increasing decentralization in UNDP necessitates more robust systems of

accountability that can be accomplished through regular performance audits and independent programme evaluation.

3. The study concluded with the following major recommendations: (a) UNDP senior management should initiate the establishment of a comprehensive feedback strategy, emphasizing the importance of monitoring and evaluation as a tool to improve both the management and quality of UNDP programmes and projects; (b) to enhance accountability, a programme performance audit and an in-depth country programme evaluation should be carried out for each country once per cycle; (c) feedback should be fully integrated into the programme and project cycle at all levels. Based on the initial positive response from senior management, CEO is developing a policy paper and a decentralized implementation plan for further consideration and endorsement.

4. Country studies on government monitoring and evaluation systems. Since July 1993, CEO has conducted seven country studies on government monitoring and evaluation systems in an endeavour to contribute to strengthening and enhancing national monitoring and evaluation systems. Three of these studies (Brazil, Uganda, Viet Nam) were commissioned during 1992 and four were initiated and completed (Bhutan, Guinea, Indonesia and Philippines) during this reporting period. The studies describe the existing monitoring and evaluation system and identify and analyse some of their strengths and weaknesses. Some of the strengths identified include: strong commitment and support from political leadership helps to ensure the effectiveness of evaluation; the crucial role of a central approach to monitoring and evaluation; and a highly organized, decentralized system with defined linkages. Among the cluster of weaknesses are: inadequacy of established common standards in various ministries and departments for measuring efficiency of performance; inadequate political commitment and financial support; an inadequately integrated reporting system and lack of sound information networks. A report on the generic issues will be presented to the Executive Board in 1995.

5. Sustainable development network. The Sustainable Development Network (SDN) was designed as a programme to support the capacity-building efforts of programme countries for sustainable development through the use of modern information technology. It had to be ensured that the mechanisms of exchanging data provide the right, timely, accurate information at the appropriate level and in the most cost-effective way. The purpose of the exercise was to assess the concept, process, management and preliminary results. Owing to the scarcity of tangible results the exercise has not been seen as an evaluation but as an interim assessment providing critical but objective and operational judgement on this programme. The report is still under review by the SDN management.

III. EVALUATION METHODOLOGY

6. Programme approach. In response to Economic and Social Council resolution 1993/7 and to paragraph 13 of General Assembly resolution 47/199 of 22 December 1992, CEO has prepared a draft of the guidelines for monitoring and evaluation in the context of the programme approach. The guiding principles emphasize measurability of the effectiveness and impact of the programme approach; the ultimate national responsibility for monitoring and evaluation;

and the need to ensure that monitoring and evaluation is a built-in component of the programme and that it is responsive to the traditional requirements of decision-making. While the monitoring system serves as an ongoing management tool for the decision makers, evaluation as a discrete exercise serves to ensure accountability and draw forward-looking lessons. The guidelines were presented to the Consultative Committee on Programme and Operational Questions (CCPOQ) in September 1993 and are being reviewed by the United Nations executing agencies. These guidelines are expected to be operationalized by the beginning of 1995 after implementation on a pilot basis for one year.

7. Evaluation of Special Programme Resources (SPR)-funded programmes. In view of the importance of SPR-funded programmes and to ensure programme quality and effectiveness, CEO has developed a broad framework for their evaluation. The basic issues to be considered by evaluation are: (a) compliance with criteria established for the whole programme and the relevant subprogrammes; (b) response to basic purposes of the subprogramme; (c) performance; (d) impact; and (e) use of the United Nations system and national expertise. While each subprogramme will be subject to separate evaluations, a comprehensive evaluation report as a whole will be submitted to the Executive Board by June 1995.

8. Revision of the guidelines for evaluators. CEO has updated the guidelines for evaluators. This document r sponds to many requests and suggestions made in the past by UNDP staff, agencies, members of the Governing Council and auditors for providing better guidance on UNDP evaluation policies, basic concepts and processes. In particular it was felt that some improvement and advice was needed in the following areas: (a) assessment of institution-building projects; (b) clarification of the expected results of mid-term and terminal evaluations; (c) formulation of recommendations and lessons; (d) assessment of impact and sustainability; (e) formulation of consistent judgements on the relevance, performance and success of projects; and (f) integration of the six areas of focus specified in Governing Council decision 90/34 into the context of project evaluation.

9. Programme performance audit system. CEO has been requested to design a performance audit system as part of an integrated effort to introduce decentralized programme management supported by accountability to achieve improved programme quality and effectiveness. The purpose of the proposed sys em is to improve the programme quality through a reinforced and clear concept of accountability and a set of performance indicators agreed upon both by the management and the organization. The programme performance audit reflects certain characteristics of internal audit inasmuch as it is an independent assessment of the management effectiveness, allocation of resources, probity of expenditure and control mechanisms. It resembles programme evaluation in its review of programme results and in its being an analytical process and a means by which managers are invited to set realistic success criteria and to monitor them. It is proposed to design and test the system in a maximum of eight pilot countries to establish its viability as a means of appraisal. Financial support for this exercise will be provided by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA).

IV. HARMONIZATION OF EVALUATION SYSTEM OF JCGP

10. Harmonization. In the context of the Joint Consultative Group on Policy (JCGP) subgroup on harmonization, an informal working group has been established with the objective of harmonizing procedures. CEO, with active participation of the evaluation units of JCGP, played a strong coordinating and leadership role in the process and presented a report to the JCGP subgroup on harmonization in June 1993. The report identified: (a) the differences in terminology and substantive issues and (b) the approaches possible in harmonizing evaluation. The report also presented a preliminary list of common principles and definitions. It was suggested that in its planned activities, the harmonization exercise could cover the following topics: (a) project/programme policies, concepts and products; (b) monitoring products for project/programme; and (c) the coordination mechanisms (common consultant roster, sharing database, training and joint evaluations). A status report including the final version of the above report will be presented within the JCGP harmonization subgroup package to the Economic and Social Council at its June 1994 session.

V. OTHER CEO ACTIVITIES

11. Country programme evaluation. In view of the forthcoming country programme evaluations planned in 1994 in selected countries, CEO has followed closely the process, documentation and materials for the mid-term reviews of country programmes carried out in 1993. Based on the field testing of the current country programme evaluation guidelines in three countries, final guidelines are expected to be ready for circulation by the end of 1994.

12. Project evaluation and database. In addition to the evaluations at the policy, strategy and thematic levels carried out by CEO, numerous project evaluations are carried out at the country level, according to UNDP policy and procedures for projects over $1 million. Information in this regard is fed into the Central Evaluation Database (CEDAB). A total of 1,070 projects have fully coded information on design, personnel, training, and textual information on results, problems, lessons and recommendations.

13. Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation (IAWG). IAWG held its latest meeting on 26 to 27 January 1993, at Geneva. The agenda included the following items: (a) analysis of the evaluation system of some United Nations agencies; (b) review of nine years of experience of IAWG; (c) computerized databases of evaluation reports; (d) monitoring and evaluation of nationally executed projects; (e) monitoring and evaluation of programmes; (f) feedback; (g) revision of monitoring and evaluation guidelines.

14. Cross-cutting issues. Emerging concerns of accountability, programme quality and impact as well as modalities of increased decentralization, national execution and programme approach, have the following direct bearing on the evaluation function of UNDP: (a) in the context of accountability, evaluation has to have more direct interaction and linkage with audit; (b) to enhance and ensure programme quality in terms of substance and impact on sustainable human development (SHD), evaluation should on the one hand be demand-driven by the strategic decision-making process, and on the other should support it through

providing constant feedback for further refinement of ongoing strategies or developing future strategies; (c) to provide central support to operational units and the field offices through the introduction of appropriate methodologies and guidelines, adoption of success and other performance indicators, and strengthening and streamlining of monitoring mechanisms for more effective programme management. These initiatives will ensure appropriate support to the operational units without usurping their responsibilities.

VI. OTHER EVALUATIONS

15. United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF). In 1993, UNCDF completed 10 evaluations: two in small-scale irrigation; two in integrated rural development; two in rural roads and bridges; one in health infrastructure; and one in credits for small-scale industries. A thematic study on participatory eco-development, examining the level and impact of community participation was completed and published. Several evaluation exercises faced difficulty in assessment of impact from estimated base-line data reconstructed during the evaluation. Evaluations also frequently pointed to the discrepancy between the anticipated and actual levels of local inputs and community participation.

16. United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM). In 1993, UNIFEM evaluation section focused on the following: (a) launching an initiative to identify Impact Measurement Indicators, the outcomes of which will be used to design the process for identifying key indicators in other programmatic areas; (b) support for carrying out two in-depth evaluations with institution-building components, the outcomes of which will be used to develop the terms of reference for a thematic evaluation of UNIFEM projects in support of institution-building over the past 10 years; (c) enhancement of the overall project appraisal process to streamline the quality control system.

17. United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO). During the year, two evaluations were carried out in Sudan at the end of the first phase on afforestation and reforestation. The mid-term evaluation of a land management project in Burkina Faso and the Acacia-Senegal project in Mali were carried out. The evaluations highlighted positive achievements on participation by farmers, the catalytic effect on local coordination and motivation. A final evaluation of projects implemented by the Committee for American Relief Everywhere (CARE) on semi-arid land management in the Niger pointed to impressive results and surpassing targets. Two ex-post evaluations were also carried out in Mali and Mauritania on improved cooking stoves.

VII. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

18. The Executive Board may wish to take note of the report of the Administrator on evaluation.

Annex I

CEO WORKPLAN FOR THE 1994-1995 BIENNIUM

	GOALS		OUTPUTS	DEADLINE
	Mission goals			
1.	To assist countries in their endeavour to achieve sustainable human development (SHD)			
1.1.	Building national capacities for SHD	1.1.1.1.	Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for programme approach and national execution (finalization)	1994
1.1.1.	Developing tools to facilitate monitoring and evaluation of programme and capacities related to SHD	1.1.1.2.	Guidelines for monitoring and evaluation for capacity-building	1994
		1.1.1.3.	Guidelines for country programme evaluation	
			Three tests at the country level	1994
			First draft	1994
			Final guidelines	1995
		1.1.1.4.	Guidelines for M&E for the areas of focus specified in Governing Council decision 90/34	1994
1.1.2.	Building capacities for monitoring and evaluation for programme countries	1.1.2.1.	Country study reports on M&E	
			Central African Republic	1994
			Chile	1994
			Costa Rica	1994
			Jordan	1994
			Paraguay	1994
			Four other countries	1995
		1.1.2.2.	Papers on generic issues (desk review/report	1994

GOALS		OUTPUTS		DEADLINE
		1.1.2.3.	Training courses	1994/95
		1.1.2.4.	Five study tours	1994/95
1.1.3.	Contributing to the evaluation of UNDP SHD-related programme (Note: for programmes followed by (a) CEO involvement is required; by (b) all sources of funds are considered; by (c) only activities funded by SPR are assessed)	Evaluation of:		
		1.1.3.1.	Poverty alleviation programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.2.	Environmental programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.3.	Management Development Programme (a)&(b)	
		1.1.3.4.	TCDC programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.5.	Transfer of technology programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.6.	WID programme evaluation (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.7.	Drug abuse control programme (c)	1994
		1.1.3.8.	HIV/AIDS programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.9.	Social dimension of adjustment programme (c)	1994
		1.1.3.10.	World Conference on Education for All programme (c)	1994
		1.1.3.11.	Private sector development programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.12.	NGO programme (a)&(b)	1994
		1.1.3.13.	SPR overall programme (c)	1994
1.2.	Strengthening international cooperation for SHD	Evaluation of:		
		1.2.1.1.	Human Development Report (c)	1994
1.2.1.	Contributing to the evaluation of programmes directed to promote SHD through international cooperation	1.2.1.2.	Round tables and support to CEO programme (c)	1994
		1.2.1.3.	NATCAP process (c)	1994
		1.2.1.4.	Needs assessment and country programme reviews (c)	1994
		1.2.1.5.	Country programme initiatives (c)	1994
		1.2.1.6.	United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development programme (c)	1994

GOALS		OUTPUTS		DEADLINE
1.2.2.	Contributing to the internal dialogue on SHD from the evaluation perspective	1.2.2.1.	Substantive UNDP representation at the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development expert group on evaluation	
			Annual March meetings	1994/95
			Seminar on country programme evaluation	May 1994
			Annual October meetings	1994/95
1.3.	Supporting peace and transition to development	<u>Evaluation of</u>:		
		1.3.1.1.	Disaster preparedness programme (a)	1994
1.3.1.	Contributing to evaluation of programmes funded by SPR aiming to mitigate disasters	1.3.1.2.	Emergency relief programme (a)	1994
		1.3.1.3.	Reconstruction and rehabilitation programme (a)	1994
		1.3.1.4.	Refugees and displaced persons programme (a)	1994
1.3.2.	Contributing to evaluation of programmes funded by SPR and responding to human needs emerging from political consideration	1.3.2.1.	Special Plan of Economic Cooperation for Central America programme (c)	1994
		1.3.2.2.	Assistance to Palestinian people programme (c)	1994
2.	<u>To support the United Nations to achieve world peace, human security and development</u>			
2.1.	Strengthening the coordination of the United Nations system for maximum impact of development cooperation as far as evaluation is concerned			

	GOALS		OUTPUTS	DEADLINE
2.1.1.	Contributing to the development and harmonization of evaluation concepts and tools	2.1.1.1.	See 1.1.1.1.	
		2.1.1.2.	Guidelines for M&E outlining outputs, impact, performance assessment and feedback	1994
	Through CCPOQ	2.1.1.3.	Contributing to harmonization of the United Nations system-wide evaluation process	1995
	Through JCGP sub-group on harmonization	2.1.1.4.	Harmonization of the JCGP evaluation procedures	1994
		2.1.1.5.	Revision of the briefing kit	1995
	Through IAWG on evaluation	2.1.1.6.	Revision of the manual	1994
3.	Making UNDP a more substantive organization			
3.1.	Providing strategic direction			
3.1.1.	Addressing issues through policy and strategy evaluations	3.1.1.1.	See under 1.1.3; 1.2.1 and 1.3.1	
		3.1.1.2.	Evaluation of Management Service Agreement impact on national capacity	1994
		3.1.1.3.	Evaluation of UNDP role in joint operations: Global Environment Facility	1994/95
		3.1.1.4.	Evaluation of UNDP impact on international and global programme	1994
		3.1.1.5.	One additional policy evaluation	1995
		3.1.1.6.	Three ex-post evaluations (at cluster/sector level) to promote upstream dialogue and tackle sensitive issues such as those related to economies in transition	1994/95

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GOALS		OUTPUTS		DEADLINE
		3.1.1.7.	Five ex-post evaluations to establish sustainability of project activities, draw lessons and assess impact	1994/95
		3.1.1.8.	Six ante evaluations on pilot scale to demonstrate crucial symbolic links between programme/project formulation and evaluation	1994/95
3.1.2.	Evaluating selected programmes	3.1.2.1.	See under 1.1.3; 1.2.1 and 3.1.1	
		Evaluation of:		
		3.1.2.2.	Civil Service Reform Programme in Africa	1995
		3.1.2.3.	Coastal area management activities	1995
		3.1.2.4.	SPR-funded Project Development Facility programme	1994
		3.1.2.5.	SPR-funded evaluation programme	1994
		3.1.2.6.	SPR-funded research programme	1994
		3.1.2.7.	Project Appraisal Committee/ Action Committee impact	1994
		3.1.2.8.	Support costs successor arrangements	1994
3.2.	Supporting country offices on programme quality, management and accountability			
3.2.1.	Supporting country offices shift to impact and results-oriented evaluation	3.2.1.1.	See under 1.1.1.3.	
		3.2.1.2.	Establishment of a programme performance audit system	1995
		3.2.1.3.	Paper on programme indicators and success criteria	1994
		3.2.1.4.	Manual on how to design a monitoring system in the context of the programme approach	1994

	GOALS		OUTPUTS	DEADLINE
3.3.	Supporting the deployment and management of funds			
3.3.1.	Providing assistance for the management of SPR	3.3.1.1.	See under 1.1.3.13.	
3.3.2.	Providing guidance for global, interregional and regional IPF	3.3.2.1.	See under 3.1.1.4.	
3.4.	Contributing to the development of the management information and communication systems			
3.4.1.	Expanding the current CEO database	3.4.1.1.	Expansion and development of CEO database	1994
		3.4.1.2.	Establishment of a database of country programme and mid-term review evaluation	1994
		3.4.1.3.	Establishment of a database of terminal reports	1994
		3.4.1.4.	Linkage with UNDP corporate system	1994/95
3.4.2.	Establishing linkages with databases outside UNDP	3.4.2.1.	Linkages with United Nations agencies databases	1994/95
		3.4.2.2.	Linkages with DAC/OECD database	1994
3.4.3.	Providing better services to UNDP users	3.4.3.1.	User-friendly access to the databases	1994
		3.4.3.2.	Dissemination of appropriate set of evaluation products responding to different user needs and feedback requirements	1994/95
		3.4.4.3.	Linkages to appropriate external source of data	1994/95

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	GOALS		OUTPUTS	DEADLINE
4.	Building substantive partnerships with the United Nations system and the international financial institutions			
4.1.	With the United Nations system	4.1.1.1.	See under 2.1.1	
4.1.1.	With the United Nations system as a whole			
4.1.2.	With specific agencies	4.1.2.1.	Joint evaluations	1994/95
			Technical and vocational training in Africa (with UNESCO, ILO & UNIDO)	1994/95
			Second joint evaluation	
4.2.	With international financial institutions			
4.2.1.	With the World bank	4.2.1.1.	Follow-up actions by the Bank resulting from 1.1.2.1.	1994/95
5.	Making UNDP a more extrovert organization			
5.1.	Ensuring transparency and substantive cooperation			
5.1.1.	With the evaluation community	5.1.1.1.	See 1.2.2.1.	
5.1.2.	With specific donors	5.2.1.1.	Cooperation with CIDA; see under 3.2.1.2.	
		5.2.1.2.	Cooperation with Sweden; see under 3.2.1	
5.1.3.	With the Executive Board	5.1.3.1.	Annual report	1994/95
		5.1.3.2.	Statistical study on trends on evaluation	1995

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	GOALS		OUTPUTS	DEADLINE
	Operational goals			
6.	Providing advisory services			
6.1.	Backstopping operational units in their evaluation activities			
6.1.1.	Offering direct support to Regional Bureaux Programmes and UNDP-administered funds	6.1.1.1.	Support to evaluation: review of terms of reference, identification of consultants, advice	Continuous
7.	Managing the Central Evaluation Office			
7.1.	Overseeing the evaluation activities of UNDP			
7.1.1.	Ensuring compliance and improvement	7.1.1.1.	See under 5.1.1.	
7.2.	Supervising the office			
7.2.1.	Ensuring an active functioning of the office	7.2.1.1.	Work programmes of the office and individual staff	1994/95
		7.2.1.2.	Monitor the financial resources: core, SPR	1994/95
		7.2.1.3.	Preparation of the new SPR document	1995

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Annex II

IMPROVING THE USE OF FEEDBACK FROM EVALUATION FINDINGS IN UNDP: A SUMMARY OF ISSUES*

I. BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Context

1. The use of feedback a/ from evaluation findings to improve programme quality is an issue of central concern to international organizations. The World Bank, the Agency for International Development of the United States (USAID), the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) and the Norwegian Agency for International Development (NORAD) have each studied this subject in recent years and the topic is of continuing interest to the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD/DAC) Group on Evaluation and to the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluation. In UNDP, concern for this subject is not recent: one of the functions foreseen for the Central Evaluation Office (CEO) when it was established by Governing Council decision 83/12 of 24 June 1983, was the introduction of a more rigorous feedback system to guarantee that the results of evaluations are properly analysed and taken into account by all three partners who bear joint responsibility for proper project design and implementation.

2. Initiatives to respond to this concern for improved quality have included the revision of and training on the 1988 guidelines for monitoring and evaluation, the compilation of project appraisal checklists, the setting up of appraisal committees and the establishment of a database in CEO on UNDP evaluation reports (CEDAB). Results of all CEO-managed individual evaluations are summarized in a publication entitled "FINDINGS". Since 1990, CEO has circulated a two-page publication, "FEEDBACK", which synthesizes generic lessons derived from data in CEO CEDAB. This publication has elicited interest from both within and outside UNDP. In its decision 92/24 of 26 May 1992, the Governing Council requested the Administrator "to expand and accelerate measures that ensure genuine feedback and use of results attained through evaluations and assessments to the programming activities of the UNDP as well as to the Governments concerned" (decision 92/24).

CEO initiatives to review issue of feedback

3. In response to the above, CEO has recently undertaken a number of activities to take stock of the current status of feedback from evaluation findings in UNDP and to identify measures for improvement. These activities consist of:

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* This summary has been previously circulated in an unedited form.

(a) A study on "Learning from Lessons Learned: Improving Feedback from Evaluation Findings", conducted by three external consultants in November/ December 1992. Along with briefing and interviews at UNDP headquarters, the team visited eight United Nations agencies, four donor agencies, the World Bank and a total of nine field offices;

(b) The administering of a short, multiple-choice questionnaire on UNDP's monitoring and evaluation system, sent to 125 UNDP field offices and 72 programme staff in headquarters, which was processed in May 1993. While responses were received from only 27 headquarters staff, the field response was strong, with returns from 104 offices received before the deadline;

(c) A statistical analysis of evaluation reports available in CEDAB as at November 1992.

Purpose

4. The purpose of the present document is to summarize conclusions and recommendations that have emerged from these studies.

II. ISSUES RAISED ON THE CURRENT STATE OF EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK IN UNDP

5. Each of the three reports approached and viewed the problem of evaluation feedback from somewhat different perspectives. The first two studies collected data and analysed the processes of monitoring and evaluation that produce feedback information and whether and how that feedback information is used in UNDP management decision-making. The third study produced feedback information by analysing CEDAB and attempted to assess the process of evaluation. Summarized below are the generic issues raised by these reports.

1. Lack of attention to evaluation and feedback in UNDP

6. The studies found that systematic attention to feedback and taking stock of lessons learned is not integrated as part of the programme functions of UNDP - both in terms of corporate cultural practice and operational directives.

7. Corporate culture. The system's overriding concern with operational activities prevents necessary reflection; this has been cited as one of the chief reasons why evaluation and feedback get short shrift in UNDP. As one field office put it, UNDP is more concerned with the quantity than with the quality of delivery. In similar vein, another field office commented that "although reflection on lessons learned is implicit in UNDP's mandate and [can be considered] one of the comparative advantages of our extensive network of field offices, it is not inserted in our culture nor in our policies, which are more preoccupied with the immediate future and innovative actions".

8. Implications for evaluation and feedback. The feedback team also found that there is an attitudinal problem in UNDP that causes resistance to evaluation and a concomitant unresponsiveness to the use of feedback. Professional ego was seen as an obstacle to the increased use of feedback and the report observes that "the designer/formulator/approver complex wishes to maintain a free hand in drawing upon their respective accumulated wisdom, experience and professional skills to maximize independence, creativity, and accommodation/negotiation with governments". Incentives to seek out feedback are few and it is viewed as a constraining factor. The use of feedback is also seen as increasing individual accountability and responsibility, which would have career consequences. In some instances, there was also a belief that each situation is unique and that feedback was therefore irrelevant.

9. The organizational culture/attitude is also reflected in one of the more startling findings of the questionnaire response, which revealed that the majority of programme staff (56 per cent) spend a very small proportion - less than 20 per cent - of their time on monitoring and evaluation functions. Furthermore, over half the respondents felt that this proportion was about correct. It should be noted that the question suggested alternatives for use of time, including project/programme planning functions, operating functions, internal UNDP administration and personnel functions. Given the nature of UNDP operations, it is generally expected that 60 to 70 per cent of programme staff time should be spent on monitoring and evaluation, with the accent on monitoring.

10. Evaluation as a resource for decision-making. Another element hindering the efficient use of evaluation was the absence of a systematic plan for evaluations identified by senior management. To date, evaluations at strategy and policy levels are requested on an ad hoc basis. At the field office level, while resident representatives are required to formulate annual evaluation plans for their programmes, such plans are not accorded priority and the results of the actual evaluations are rarely given broader consideration in the organization. The overall conclusion is that there is no culture or organizational system currently in place that stresses the use of evaluations as a vital resource in decision-making. b/

11. Functional value of monitoring and evaluation system. Ninety-one per cent of the field offices indicated that they felt the current monitoring and evaluation system does not meet their needs fully. Overall, serious doubt was expressed whether the existing tripartite evaluation system provides sufficient high-quality, independent findings. When asked to select a definition of the ideal monitoring and evaluation system, 75 per cent of programme staff felt that the system should be one that provides lessons learned from all levels and types of UNDP and agency operations and should enable UNDP to learn from experience.

12. The study team also indicated that some field offices feel that evaluation activities have become ritualistic and are performed as a matter of routine. It was felt that evaluations should be undertaken on demand and that the focus in evaluation should shift from concerns about accountability to research into the causality of successful/unsuccessful development. The need for accountability could be secured through a system of programme performance audits.

13. Lack of written guidance on feedback. None of the current instruments emphasize a concern for lessons learned as an issue that requires time and thought during (a) project design and (b) the formulation of the evaluation report itself. In an organization such as UNDP, which is by necessity format-driven because of the need for uniformity in presentation and reporting requirements, the consequences of scant attention to evaluation and feedback in written instructions are considerable.

14. Project design. There are no project/programme guidelines that emphasize the need to take stock of past experience. c/ Both the feedback study and questionnaire responses have stressed the need to incorporate a pre-appraisal step during formulation that would focus on the consideration of lessons learned. They make reference to the World Bank practice of paying particular attention to the pre-appraisal stage of project formulation.

15. Evaluation report. The study reported that at the field office level "there is no clear understanding as to how lessons learned are meant to be conceptualized, or for whom they are meant. Follow-up action was limited to specific recommendations. The lessons learned portion rarely came in for action and comment." In addition, existing guidelines do not emphasize actions or set up systems to ensure dissemination, discussion and use of evaluation findings for management actions. Further, there is no provision to identify the party responsible for the follow-up of evaluation findings.

16. Linkage between project design and evaluation. Overall in UNDP, project design, formulation, monitoring and evaluation are not currently perceived as one continuum but as discrete stages in a process. Adjustment of this approach is important as the indicators for success/failure, which are critical for effective and realistic evaluation, must be set out at project formulation and modified through monitoring activity.

17. Compliance systems. There are no compliance systems to ensure stock-taking of lessons learned. Feedback considerations are not incorporated as an important part of project appraisal at the Project Appraisal Committee (PAC) in the field and headquarters or Action Committee stage. This finding is supported by questionnaire respondents, the majority of whom (56 per cent) indicated that briefs prepared for the Action Committee contain reference to lessons learned less than 50 per cent of the time. The majority (75 per cent) of the respondents also indicated that they are questioned about lessons learned at the Action Committee less than 50 per cent of the time. Furthermore, evaluation findings are not, as a matter of course, systematically reported to the Action Committee or to any other forum.

18. Responsibility for seeking out feedback. Current guidelines do not define who is responsible for seeking feedback. It is therefore often assumed to be the responsibility of the United Nations agency concerned and not the responsibility of UNDP staff involved in the formulation and evaluation of a project/programme. However, there is little attempt on UNDP's part to verify that agencies have given thought to feedback issues or to consult with CEO on possible lessons learned from evaluations of similar projects in other countries. In fact, at the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on

Evaluation of 1993, there was a call from all United Nations agencies for UNDP to be more active in promoting the use of feedback in UNDP programmes/projects.

19. Updating evaluation methodologies. The team notes that while the nature of UNDP operations has changed substantially during the past few years (in terms of decentralization, national execution of projects, programme approach and successor arrangements for agency support costs), evaluation methodologies and feedback techniques have not kept pace with changes in many important respects. On this topic, the report also contains the cautionary note sounded by some field offices that expressed dismay that in UNDP new systems are put in place when small revisions are often sufficient and less disruptive.

2. Piecemeal nature of existing feedback system in UNDP

20. The feedback study analyzed the capture and communication of feedback by making a broad distinction between document-based and people-based feedback. The overall conclusion was that there is no feedback system in operation and though UNDP has elements of such a system, these are functioning in a less than optimal fashion.

21. Document-based. The feedback value of project and programme level documentation (tripartite review reports, in-depth and terminal reports on projects, mid-term and assessment reports of country programmes) was regarded as having a useful potential. However, utility was limited by the country-specific nature, the lack of objectivity and the fact that the exercises themselves were not generally conducted in a rigorous, independent and in-depth manner. The reception by users of UNDP materials that strive to capture feedback at the global level (i.e., programme advisory notes, technical advisory notes, FINDINGS and FEEDBACK) was lukewarm. Responses to the questionnaire also indicated that the majority of field offices considered the quality of information products produced by UNDP to be below par. There was also considerable ignorance of the type of information available. The questionnaire listed 25 sources of feedback information 18 of which were made available by headquarters. Only 28.5 per cent of these were known to the average field office. Of those that were known, over 37 per cent were not used in decision-making. It is also noteworthy that the type of information ranked first and second in utility by the field offices were not UNDP products but from such sources as governments, the World Bank and United Nations agency sources (e.g., the International Labour Organization (ILO)).

22. People-based. The report considered Action Committee meetings, PACs and training programmes under this category. As noted above, it found that evaluation findings are not systematically reported upon in the briefs prepared for the Action Committee and that in no case was feedback insisted upon during PACs.

23. The study makes the point that other organizations make use of a much wider range of feedback mechanisms that emphasize people-based exchanges and have found oral briefings to be one of the most effective methods of communicating results and ensuring that lessons learned are absorbed quickly. Such people-based feedback activity included video/transparency presentations for senior

management, focused comments on how evaluation findings could impact on present policies and strategies, special seminars, focus groups, peer reviews and workshops to review important findings from a policy perspective.

24. Databases. The use of programme databases is not well established in UNDP and the feedback study found that the appropriate corporate environment which would encourage such use has not yet evolved. Current organizational use of databases is seen as being somewhat passive and there is little widespread use of database information for analytic purposes. While CEDAB is proving to be a useful source of information to CEO, it is not yet available in the field and technical teething troubles have been experienced in its introduction at headquarters.

25. Humanization and internalization of feedback lessons. The report stresses, however, that efficient systems alone will not guarantee more use or improve organizational learning. To achieve this, attention must be paid to the humanization and internalization of feedback since better organizational learning is possible if individuals in an organization learn their own lessons. At present, all in-depth evaluation is undertaken by external consultants, which means that it is kept at a distance by UNDP staff and the organization does not reap dividends in terms of learning that is internalized. The same observation holds true for project formulation.

26. Producing feedback. The team established that the analytical process of drawing transferable lessons from experience is far more demanding, rigorous and time-consuming than may appear at first sight. A single evaluation report is rarely sufficient to generate transferable feedback. There is also a need to be able to tailor a response to a request for feedback information. Therefore, effective feedback cannot be generated without special skills and investment in training and access to research and synthesis expertise.

27. Dissemination of evaluation feedback. The report observed that the present dissemination strategy attempts to impose findings and lessons from evaluations on UNDP field offices instead of encouraging them to seek relevant feedback. Such a strategy has not been adopted intentionally but the system has assumed that a market exists or should exist in the interests of the programme.

28. Training. The relative priority accorded to training closely parallels the extent to which an organization is considered a learning institution. The study notes that while training has received increasing attention in UNDP, the number of training days per annum is still very low, at approximately 2-3 days per staff member. The report indicates that top-ranked private corporations often provide 5-10 days per annum per staff member, particularly during periods of rapid change and restructuring. Furthermore, there are no programmes on evaluation training and the potential for sensitizing participants to the findings of evaluations through case studies has not yet been adequately explored. Attention has not been paid to developing training courses that encompass project design, monitoring and evaluation and demonstrate the crucial link among these three elements.

3. Need to focus on monitoring and evaluation capacity-building in recipient countries

29. Both the feedback study and the responses to the questionnaire indicate that UNDP should be less introspective. It was pointed out that UNDP should start to develop an approach in its monitoring and evaluation system that caters primarily to the needs of the beneficiaries. Responses also indicated that while there is a high level (92 per cent) of Governments participating in UNDP monitoring and evaluation activities, most Government staff do not find the procedures particularly good or bad (77 per cent made neutral comments on monitoring procedures and 82 per cent were neutral on evaluation procedures). In instances when they were not neutral in their comments, Governments (14 per cent) criticized UNDP procedures more than they praised them.

30. On this subject, the feedback team cites an effective approach adopted by the Asian Development Bank that has helped the Government to set up a central evaluation office in Sri Lanka and has trained officers in the principles and techniques of evaluation. Similar endeavours were reported to have been successful in Morocco and Chile with the held of UNDP projects. It should also be noted that UNDP has been acknowledged as having played a lead role in strengthening national monitoring and evaluation capacity through the CEO programme for the preparation of national monitoring and evaluation monographs. To date, this exercise has been completed in 10 countries.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS TO IMPROVE EVALUATION AND FEEDBACK IN UNDP

1. Policy affirmation

31. There is an obvious need for UNDP senior management to issue a strong policy statement reaffirming concern for management excellence and the belief that the accumulated experience of UNDP in development is one of its strongest points of comparative and competitive advantage.

32. This statement should, among other things, reaffirm monitoring and evaluation as a tool to improve both the management and quality of UNDP programmes and projects. It should highlight the fact that ownership for programme improvement is vested in UNDP and that each staff member has an individual contribution to make and a responsibility for improving the quality of programmes and for using evaluation findings in management decisions.

2. Use of evaluation for lesson learning

33. Programme performance audits. The feedback study has recommended that attention should be paid to refining existing country programme review instruments so that they serve as a type of programme performance audit to enhance accountability at this time of increased decentralization. The feedback study sees this exercise as being conducted once per cycle and as involving the Division of Audit and Management Review and CEO. A parallel study stemming from the evaluation of the country programme for Myanmar, has also resulted in the recommendation that country programme evaluations, carried out by independent

outside consultants, should replace prior programme assessment made by the resident representatives. This study sees the country programme evaluations as being organized by the regional bureaux in close consultation with CEO.

34. These two recommendations will require careful review organization-wide to ensure that changes are made with the chief interest of streamlining and rationalizing current instruments without burdening the system with new requirements.

35. Evaluation plans, dissemination of findings and evaluation follow-up. To foster lesson learning, thought may be given to the formulation of annual evaluation plans at the senior management and bureaux levels. While senior management interest would be in topics of strategic and policy concerns, the bureaux may be interested in topics of regional and subregional concern. At the field-office level, a more self-conscious approach to the evaluation plans (that are part of the six-monthly country programme management plans) should be adopted. In addition, field offices may wish to consider cluster evaluations on themes associated with each country programme. The possibility of some field offices adopting common topics or undertaking joint evaluations (such as progress with the incorporation of gender concerns and the experience with national execution) may also be considered in the interests of facilitating the exchange of experiences.

36. Evaluation topics must be selected based on the usefulness of the topic and attention should be paid the needs of the recipients of each evaluation and how results will be disseminated. The formulation of evaluation plans should therefore include specific attention to dissemination actions such as oral briefings, presentations, articles for UNDP publications, incorporation in training material (e.g., as case studies). Care should also be taken to ensure that a management response to the findings and recommendations of each evaluation is factored into evaluation plans. Responsibility for follow-up of evaluation recommendations should also be clearly defined.

37. The feedback report has also recommended that thought be given to a feedback framework that would recognize the need to encourage the users to seek guidance instead of guidance being forced on them. The proposed framework segments the total market which evaluations seek to serve according to specific client concerns, namely, stakeholders concerned with (a) strategy and policy issues at the programme levels; (b) operations management; (c) funding; and (d) programme performance and impact.

38. Role of CEO. The revamping of the UNDP monitoring and evaluation system requires that attention be paid to reviewing the status and role of the evaluation function in UNDP, particularly in the following areas:

(a) Planning. As a result of a strategic planning exercise undertaken by CEO in 1991 (see DP/1992/20), CEO has embarked on a workplan in which programme evaluations are the primary focus during the first few years of the fifth cycle. These cover evaluations of a national, regional or thematic nature (such as the study of high tech projects in India and China). Strategic evaluations (evaluating UNDP performance in the six areas of focus and of the Special

Programme Resources (SPR) programmes) and policy evaluations (such as the UNDP focus on human development) will be launched later.

There should be more interactive consultation between senior management and CEO and active dialogue between CEO and the operational units when the annual workplan is being finalized. This will ensure the selection of topics that are of use and concern to stakeholders and will help in the development of a demand-oriented evaluation function supported by the joint financing of evaluation activity.

(b) Implementation of evaluations. Some CEO evaluations should be undertaken jointly with bureaux and selected field offices. Consideration should be given to using UNDP staff seconded to CEO to lead and undertake evaluations so that institutional learning is internalized.

(c) Staffing. The adoption of proposals to enhance and strengthen the monitoring and evaluation function in UNDP will also require a review of the quality and number of staff required. CEO currently has a Director and four Professional staff members; all substantive evaluation activity is undertaken by external consultants. While "the Kienbaum report" (see document DP/1991/50) envisaged a staff of 16 officers, the 1991 Strategic Plan (see DP/1992/20) Strategy-based senior management structure for the United Nations Development Programme saw CEO composed of 8 core staff (including the Director) plus 5 professionals outposted to the regional bureaux.

(d) Location. The institutional location of CEO may also require senior management attention and consideration. In its review of the location of the evaluation function in other agencies, the feedback study noted that one model was the World Bank's Operations Evaluation Department (OED), which reports directly and independently to the Board of Directors and is headed by a senior director appointed on a five-year contract with the convention that the appointee would not be eligible for any other job in the Bank after that term. Another, more widespread model resembles that of USAID, where staff of the Center for Development Information and Evaluation form part of the Administrator's core staff. Similarly in the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Trade Centre (ITC), the evaluation function is located within the office of the executive head of the organization.

(e) Activities. The study recommends that CEO should undertake more joint evaluation activities with other United Nations and multilateral agencies. It is also felt that UNDP should continue to exercise a leadership role in the United Nations Inter-Agency Working Group on Evaluations.

(f) Funding. At present, all CEO major programme evaluation work is funded through SPR, of which $2 million (of the $7 million allocated by the Governing Council for the fifth cycle) is currently available for programming. Database management and other core activities are covered by administrative funds of $200,000 allotted to CEO each year. However, as evaluation is a core function similar to audit and management review, consideration of the

appropriateness of relying almost exclusively on SPR resources for CEO activity is required.

3. Establishing a feedback system in UNDP

39. Updating UNDP monitoring and evaluation methodology and guidelines. Improvement of the monitoring and evaluation system procedures will need to mirror the new programme planning procedures and should focus on defining and measuring outputs and impact rather than inputs and activities. The move to the programme approach, national execution and decentralized management implies that monitoring and evaluation functions must become significantly more important in assessing UNDP performance. To be effective, the revised system must make existing instruments simpler to use and should also focus more emphatically on strengthening national capacity. It should also consider the comparative advantage of UNDP in promoting joint evaluation of sectors and programmes in which many donors may be involved even though UNDP may sometimes be only a minor partner.

40. Feedback system. In updating UNDP monitoring and evaluation methodology and guidelines, attention should be paid to assessing the use of current elements of the feedback system and exploring new feedback mechanisms and techniques (including electronic systems). This will involve the review and adjustment of existing written instructions, document-based feedback, people-based feedback activity, data-based information and training systems. The revised system should view project design, formulation, monitoring and evaluation as a complete continuum and pay specific attention to establishing success criteria at the formulation stage.

41. Pilot-project to access tailor-made feedback. To create high quality, usable, demand-driven feedback from evaluation findings, UNDP should consider access to the existing feedback synthesis service operated by the Academy of Educational Development under a USAID contract in Washington, D.C., on a pilot-project basis. This service works through the USAID Development Information Office, which is responsible for maintaining the AID institutional memory and for bringing past experience and lessons learned to bear upon new project and programme developments. It has access to a widespread network of institutional and academic sources of information.

42. Databases. Existing electronic databases should be made more user-friendly without in any way compromising the integrity of the data. The feedback study contains detailed recommendations on streamlining CEDAB data and the possibility of downloading and incorporating relevant information from the USAID CD-ROM database. UNDP is also a part of the DAC/OECD database inventory maintained by CIDA and steps should be taken to explore further access and use of these multilateral databases.

43. Training. Training efforts should be redirected to ensure that they cover project design and formulation together with monitoring and evaluation. The use of case studies derived from actual UNDP experience should also be pursued.

4. Strengthening national capacity

44. High priority needs to be given to strengthening government capacity in monitoring and evaluation and to the development of national feedback systems.

Notes

a/ In the present context, Feedback is defined as a management term that covers: (i) organizing evaluation findings to guide future aid programme decisions; (ii) necessary measures taken to deal with weaknesses revealed by the evaluation, which includes sending results to the operational units and a concern for lessons learned, follow-up, and determining whether results have been implemented.

b/ This situation may be contrasted with that which exists in USAID. In 1990, Administrator Roskens announced an evaluation initiative in a USAID General Notice issued on 31 October 1990, in which he laid down two fundamental policies: (a) "Making evaluation central to how we do business and to how I carry out my own responsibilities is a large part of our ability to manage for results," and (b) "Putting evaluation to work to improve development results is everyone's job". Subsequent to this, Roskens circulated his evaluation agenda which covers three years and is updated annually. The views of all stakeholders (the directorates and bureaux in Washington, all field missions and the Office of Management and Budget) are sought, prior to the finalization of the agenda, in order to find out what they think would be most useful for inclusion.

c/ Programme and Projects Manual (PPM) guidelines on the Project Formulation Framework make no reference to taking stock of past evaluations/ experience. In the Project Document format, the only reference to prior and ongoing assistance is embedded in the four-part introductory "Context" section. In the Project Appraisal Checklist, only 1 of the 46 questions addresses the issue: "Have the results of evaluations or other assessments of similar projects been taken into account? Have any relevant TANs and PANs been reviewed," to which a "Yes/No" response is expected. However, this requirement to consider feedback has had negligible impact since more than 80 per cent of the questionnaire respondents indicated that the checklist is never completed.